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Fiftieth Session

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New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Announcement by the President

The President: I should like to inform members that the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, established by Assembly resolution 49/252 of 14 September 1995, will meet next Monday, 9 October 1995, at 3 p.m. in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. All interested delegations are invited to attend.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The first speaker this morning is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Alfred Nzo, upon whom I now call.

Mr. Nzo (South Africa): Mr. President, I wish to extend to you, on behalf of the South African delegation, my sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Your election demonstrates the high regard in which the international community holds your country. I should also like to express our deep gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, a brother from Africa and the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, who presided over the forty-ninth session with great wisdom. I should also like to express to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, our continued confidence in his guidance of the Organization.

A half century ago representatives from 50 countries met at San Francisco to draft the United Nations Charter, the Declaration of Human Rights and the Statute of the International Court of Justice. For the United Nations to have survived for a period of 50 years in an imperfect world is indeed a milestone and a tribute to the visionary steps taken half a century ago towards the creation of a better world.

South Africa's involvement with the United Nations goes back to the very conception and birth of this illustrious body. The then-Prime Minister of South Africa, Field Marshal J. C. Smuts, helped to draft the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations. In the Preamble many lofty ideas were expressed, among which were the following:

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

How ironic that those in power in South Africa since then, and until last year, acted in a precisely contrary spirit. The United Nations contributed significantly in bringing about change in South Africa. Through perseverance and commitment, the United

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Nations assisted us in our struggle to achieve democracy. Our reward is its reward. I should like again to express the gratitude of both the people and the Government of South Africa for its foresight and courage.

Just over a year ago, on 23 June 1994 to be precise, I had the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of South Africa. On that occasion, which marked South Africa's resumption of its participation in the work of the General Assembly of the United Nations, we were filled with joy and pride at the peaceful transition of South Africa into a united, non-racial, democratic and non-sexist society.

In the intervening months I have travelled to many countries, visited with many foreign ministers and met with several Heads of State or Government. We spoke of the miracle that is South Africa. We shared our thoughts and experiences on the road to that miracle. In that context, we continue to encourage those who seek change for a better life to stand fast in their belief.

As the representative of a Member of the United Nations, I should like to reassure you of our belief in and support for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the Organization.

The events in April 1994 in South Africa marked a break with the past as well as a commitment to the future, placing a heavy burden on us. As a young democracy, we are ready to meet the challenge. South Africa will meet this challenge with a firm commitment to the promotion of national welfare, prosperity and security, with a firm commitment to the strengthening of cooperation in the pursuit of the economic development and security of the southern African subregion, with an active commitment to peace, stability and good governance within the African region and elsewhere, with a firm commitment to South-South cooperation and with a commitment to responsible international citizenship.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was conceived in the struggle for freedom in southern Africa and born of the courage of its leaders in setting out to create a new reality.

The liberation of South Africa and the end of southern Africa's destabilization brought great opportunities for the development of our subregion. We must now translate those hopes into reality. In accordance with the Abuja Treaty, we must transform the southern African region into one of the reliable building blocks on which Africa's economic regeneration will be built.

Our greatest need today is to eradicate the scourge of poverty afflicting the great mass of our people. Only then can we fulfil the dream of Africa's liberation in the health, happiness and well-being of its children.

The mission of SADC reflects the reality that southern Africa has long since passed the stage of lamenting the privations of the past. The challenge is to find within ourselves the resources to overcome this legacy, with the cooperation of the international community. We need to adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing world economy and to develop the skills needed to compete internationally.

South Africa's main objective is to play a constructive role in bringing peace and stability to the region. We are totally committed to the utilization of preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and peacemaking, through the use of regional and multilateral mechanisms.

In this context, South Africa participated with others in the resolution of the conflict in Lesotho and provided logistical support for the elections in Mozambique. Our support for United Nations resolutions and actions regarding Angola and the Western Sahara should also be seen in that light.

As an elected member of the Central Organ of the Conflict Resolution Mechanism of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) from June 1994 to June 1995, we participated in several missions to Burundi. South Africa was part of a special four-member ministerial mission elected to assess the nature and the scope of the Burundi conflict with a view to encouraging and assisting the Burundians to resolve their differences and end that conflict. We continue to participate in the Mechanism as an invited observer.

In view of the desperate situation in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, it has become imperative for States to cooperate as far as possible with the respective ad hoc criminal tribunals that have been created for those territories. In that regard, my country has made available some of its most talented jurists to assist.

These situations have demonstrated anew the real need for the establishment of a permanent international criminal court. This issue has been revitalized in the past few years, and a window of opportunity now exists to

finally bring the court into existence. It is my sincere hope that significant progress will be made in that regard during this session of the General Assembly.

As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, mankind is still faced with political instability, dictatorship, corruption, civil war, millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, persistent economic decline and continued impoverishment.

In the past year, the international political climate has experienced a succession of changes which have brought both hope and a certain measure of despair to mankind. Hope has, however, remained a beckoning beacon bringing about a sense of confidence in the future. We were saddened by events in Somalia, but rejoiced at the transition in Haiti and El Salvador. We despair at the tragedy that is Bosnia, yet hope that the emerging signs of a solution will come to fruition.

In this spirit, allow me to congratulate the peoples of Israel and Palestine on having reached yet another landmark in their journey towards a lasting settlement. We encourage and support the Middle East peace process.

The issues of proliferation and disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, are among the major questions that have been facing the international community in recent times. At the historic 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), all those present agreed to exercise the utmost restraint pending the entry into force of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. We are of the view that the recent tests conducted by two nuclear-weapon States are retrogressive steps in the international community's endeavour to ban nuclear testing. We believe that these tests will negatively affect the outcome of work on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. The South African Government is strongly opposed to these and any further nuclear tests being conducted, and calls upon those States to cease testing, so as to enhance international efforts towards non-proliferation and disarmament. We call upon them to honour both the letter and the spirit of the Principles and Objectives which they agreed to and helped negotiate at the NPT Review and Extension Conference. South Africa has dismantled its nuclear capability. South Africa, for its part, has proven its commitment to nuclear disarmament. Now it is the turn of others to manifest a similar commitment.

South Africa notes with great satisfaction the progress achieved thus far towards the establishment of an African nuclear-weapon-free zone. We have been actively involved in trying to find solutions to the outstanding issues, and we trust that these hurdles can be overcome and the draft treaty of Pelindaba can receive due consideration during this session of the General Assembly. The draft treaty is important as it would expand the non-nuclear-weapon area of the globe considerably and would be a further step towards the final goal of complete nuclear disarmament. South Africa appeals to the nuclear-weapon States to ensure that the draft treaty is concluded and the relevant protocols signed.

Since the 1986 declaration of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, significant progress has been made in the political, economic, scientific, technical and cultural spheres to further the objectives of the Zone. Only relatively few obstacles remain. We hope to advance this endeavour when the next meeting of participating nations takes place in Cape Town in March 1996.

On 13 September 1995 South Africa became the thirty-seventh State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. On the same day South Africa also acceded to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. The ratification of the chemical weapons Convention again underlines the commitment of the Government of National Unity to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. South Africa's accession to the Convention on certain conventional weapons underlines my Government's commitment to the elimination of the suffering that is caused by the scourge of war. South Africa has, for this reason, decided to extend its moratorium on the export of land-mines by the introduction of a permanent ban on the export or sale of long-lived anti-personnel land-mines. Furthermore, on 30 August 1995 the Government of National Unity approved the draft of a new conventional-arms-control policy. A National Conventional Arms Control Committee has been established and will function in accordance with predetermined guiding principles and criteria to ensure that arms trade and transfers conform to accepted international practice.

As previously mentioned, the principal role of the United Nations is to safeguard international peace and security in order to implement universal respect for

human rights and to create conditions necessary for sustainable development. Without peace, security and human rights, sustainable development will be difficult to achieve. Without development and respect for human rights, international peace and security will continually be threatened.

As President Mandela stated in 1992,

> "Our common humanity transcends the oceans and all national boundaries. It binds us together in common cause against tyranny, to act together in defence of our very humanity. Let it never be asked of any one of us what we did when we knew that another was oppressed."

Mankind should learn to act against all tyranny in a unified manner through the United Nations. This should be our basic aim for the future.

South Africa also wishes to call attention to the activities of mercenaries, irrespective of their origin and objectives. Their destabilizing activities cannot be tolerated. We call on the international community and the United Nations to be seized of this problem of mercenaries.

The women of South Africa have lived, in varying degrees, under three forms of oppression, relating to race, to class and to gender. One of the first steps towards initiating positive change in the lives of all South African women was the entrenchment of gender rights in our Bill of Rights. It was with much pride that the South African delegation took their seats at the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing. That was the first time South Africa participated in a conference on women which focused on the eradication of poverty, and equal access to education and to health services. South Africa is fully committed to implementing the Platform for Action adopted at that Conference, which will serve as the impetus for a world of equality, development and peace for all. In addition, our Parliament has most recently approved South Africa's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without any reservations.

Years of apartheid rule have bequeathed the overwhelming majority black population with a heavy legacy of poverty, social disintegration and political cleavages based on colour and ethnic animosities. It therefore became the priority task of the South African Government of National Unity to devise a national strategy to address this catastrophic situation. A comprehensive and multi-pronged developmental strategy known as the Reconstruction and Development Programme is now being implemented. The implementation of this Programme relies primarily on the mobilization of domestic resources through prioritization of budgetary resources, with a view to addressing the huge material inequalities in such areas as education, health, housing, infrastructure development and land reform. It is a unique people-centred and people-driven Programme, which seeks to translate into economic benefit the political miracle in our country. At the very heart of this Programme is the acknowledgement of the inextricable interdependence between the need for transparent, accountable and democratic governance of our society and the imperative of dynamic economic growth and sustainable development.

South Africa will host the ninth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX) from 26 April to 11 May 1996. This is an event which all South Africans are looking forward to with great expectation. Indeed, it is my pleasure to announce that our preparations are well advanced and on course.

We attach great significance to UNCTAD IX for a number of reasons. We believe that the rapid progress of globalization and liberalization of the world economy has underscored the relevance and importance of UNCTAD as a United Nations institution with a strong development mandate and perspective. We also believe that the successful completion of the Uruguay Round of negotiations and the resultant creation of the World Trade Organization not only has stressed the validity and relevance of UNCTAD, but has also reinforced the need to retain and strengthen UNCTAD's mandate as a policy-oriented global intergovernmental forum on trade and development issues. It is a forum where a strong partnership for development between the developed and the developing countries can, and must, be forged. While there may be a need to streamline certain UNCTAD activities, this should not lead to its demise. Without UNCTAD, our world, especially the developing world, would be the poorer.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's satisfaction with the intergovernmental process at the United Nations to draw up a United Nations Agenda for Development. We believe that the United Nations is the appropriate forum for the elaboration of the Agenda for Development. The Agenda for Development could open great possibilities for development and for partnership between the developed

and the developing countries. It is for this reason that South Africa is taking great interest in the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development.

My Government has been following with great interest the ongoing High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. In this connection, I join others in calling on the international community to devise a global strategy to effectively address the debt question confronting the least developed countries, and to use innovative measures — whether it be official development aid, foreign direct investment or multilateral financial assistance — to arrest the decline of resources destined for the least developed countries.

I would also like to call upon the international community to vigorously pursue measures required to successfully implement the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. We are pleased in that regard by the progress registered during the Economic and Social Council's session in Geneva, especially the high-level segment, which was devoted to the aforementioned Agenda. Of course, the challenge before the international community is to find adequate resources to translate this Agenda into tangible results. It is our hope that this issue will be treated with the required urgency, given that next year there will be a mid-term global review of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa.

Recognizing the importance of cooperation between developing States, South Africa has acceded to an agreement establishing the South Centre. The South Centre will effectively operate as a policy research unit for the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77, and will draft policy-oriented position papers on issues of critical importance to the South. It will, in addition to this basic function, generate ideas and proposals for consideration by Governments of the South and other institutions.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development engendered a process of environmental action and awareness centred on the relationship between economic development and the sustainable management of the environment. It is our duty to carry this process forward in an integrated manner and reconfirm our commitment to the implementation of international agreements which seek to manage and preserve the world's environment.

South Africa is very conscious that the capacity of developing countries to implement sustainable environmental strategies will have to be strengthened. The resources pledged towards the attainment of goals set out in Agenda 21 will have to be made available if we are to succeed in achieving the imperatives of development, sustainable use of the environment, and democracy in the world.

In Africa, in particular, the ravages of drought and the advances of desertification require urgent attention. The global community's concern for the environment should be reflected in a common approach to the manifold environmental pressures threatening our global heritage.

The United Nations also has an important role to play in assisting States threatened by natural or man-made disasters. Preventive diplomacy can contribute towards eliminating man-made disasters. However, the results of both man-made disasters and natural disasters can be ameliorated by effective international humanitarian assistance coordination through the United Nations. This will naturally require more coherent programmed delivery and coordination by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and other international institutions. The United Nations will have to ensure that the necessary capacities and mechanisms are created. Recent international action, especially the follow-up to the Tokyo Conference, has demonstrated that sufficient international will exists to perform this function.

We welcome the adoption on 14 September 1995 of General Assembly resolution 49/252, on the strengthening of the United Nations. I wish to assure the Assembly of our intention to work constructively with the President in this endeavour.

The world in which we find ourselves today is greatly changed from just 10 years ago. The cold war has ended, the scourge of apartheid has been removed from our common society and peace has come to Mozambique and now Angola. We have also seen the membership of our United Nations increase to 185, a substantial increase since the time the Security Council's membership was last increased. As a result of these, and other, factors the international community faces a window of opportunity

within which the Security Council can be successfully restructured and reformed.

Within the overall effort to reform the United Nations, South Africa believes that the structure and functioning of the Security Council should be reformed to make it more representative, democratic and transparent. The product of these efforts must be a Security Council that is effective and legitimate, and that reflects the realities of our modern world. This result can be achieved only if reform and restructuring is dealt with as a package. One of the products of this reform process must result in Africa having equitable representation on any enlarged Security Council.

It would be appropriate for me to conclude by referring to the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The people of South Africa will celebrate this fiftieth anniversary in concert with the rest of the world. Our National Committee organizing the events in our country has adopted the following as its Declaration of Intent:

> "To create an awareness among the peoples of South Africa of the role which the United nations can play in their daily lives, and to assist the United Nations in responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century."

President Mandela looks forward to joining his fellow world leaders in a few weeks' time to celebrate the visionary step taken half a century ago towards the creation of a better world. Building on the successes and victories of the past, we now embrace the future. We can face the challenges ahead, inspired by a vision of a new world where peace and respect for human dignity are the standard.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport of Barbados, Her Excellency Ms. Billie Miller.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): It is my pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly. The Barbados delegation shares the confidence expressed in your leadership, and offers our full cooperation as you preside over the deliberations of this landmark event.

I also commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, not only for his outstanding stewardship of the Assembly during the last year, but for the vision and direction he has given to the ongoing work designed to fashion the United Nations of the twenty-first century.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to a fellow member of small island developing States, the Republic of Palau, whose admission to the United Nations took place in December 1994.

Fifty years ago, the United Nations rose from the ashes of a devastating world war. Understandably, the Organization was shaped and influenced by the experience of that war and by the coalition of Powers that prevailed in 1945. It also grew to reflect the forces underpinning the post-war system of international relations — a system characterized by that paralysis of international political will known as the cold war.

Yet, to its credit, the United Nations has fostered remarkable progress on such vital issues as decolonization, development and human rights, as well as on a wide array of international standards, which we have come to take for granted. Through its extensive network of organs and specialized agencies, the United Nations system has made tangible and lasting improvements in the lives of men, women and children all over the world.

But that old order has come to an end, and we face anew a world of tumultuous global change. Barbados sees this world through the eyes of a member of the small island developing States — joint products of decolonization and the relative geopolitical stability that the United Nations has ensured since our independence. As a group, we have had mixed success in transforming the legacies of colonial tutelage into genuine and sustained development for our peoples.

As small and fragile members of the global community, we are constantly reminded of our own economic and political vulnerability. For us, what happens outside our borders, beyond our control, whether man-made or natural, sometimes has more impact on our way of life than anything we may do at home. One hurricane can wipe out, in a matter of hours, an entire small island economy. Only three weeks ago, Hurricane Luis wrought such devastation on a number of our Caribbean neighbours, causing major set-backs in their economic development. We extend our sincere sympathy to our brothers and sisters at this time of distress. Barbados is cooperating fully with others in helping to restore normal life to these Caribbean Member States.

For small island States, how we recover from disasters such as this, and perhaps more important, how we work towards ensuring that we make ourselves less vulnerable: these are paramount to our survival. Clearly, short-term assistance and the sympathy of the international community, while crucial, are not enough. Small size also means that our entire society, not just areas of it, is equally vulnerable to dislocations of the global economic system, including currency and commodity price fluctuations, new international trading arrangements, and the changing fortunes of the major industrial economies.

Notwithstanding these natural or man-made constraints, many small island States, including my own, have achieved rising per capita incomes and improved human development indicators but such indices provide only an approximate measure of the present, based on the past. They do not, and cannot, measure our vulnerability, the resilience or lack of resilience of our economies and entire societies in the face of natural disasters and rapid global economic change.

It is in this broad context that Barbados has given the highest importance to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which my country had the honour to host last year. The Programme of Action, adopted by consensus, underscores the role which the stewardship of small island States plays in the preservation of the global commons. We urge international action to step up the support pledged in the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action. My delegation therefore calls for the steady implementation of the commitments and recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 49/122 of 19 December 1994.

As a small vulnerable State, Barbados views some areas of the global political scene with deep concern. Following the end of the cold war, the people of the world yearn for an era of peace and economic prosperity — but peace, so far, has proved elusive. The outbreak of violence and ethnic strife has reached unspeakable levels of human suffering, taxing the capacity of the United Nations support system to the limit.

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the large majority of Member States looks on in agony and helplessness at a crisis which has called into question the very credibility of the Organization and the integrity of its peace-keeping function. We recall words of the late Sir Winston Churchill today: But Bosnia has not been the United Nations "finest hour". But let us not forget that the United Nations is no more, no less, than the collective will of the Governments it serves.

For vulnerable small States, United Nations protection is critical. Developing countries, particularly those least able to afford it, bring no influence to bear on major peace-keeping decisions, yet must pay their assessed share of peace-keeping costs, diverting scarce resources from the development effort. Barbados welcomes the encouraging signs which have recently emerged from the peace process between the parties of former Yugoslavia, and hopes that an end could be soon brought to the strife and bloodshed in this war-torn region.

Barbados shares the anguish of the people in the strife-torn countries of Africa, in particular, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, and in similar areas of conflict around the world, and hopes for early progress towards lasting peace in those areas. At the same time, we welcome the positive developments in the peace process in Angola and that between Israel and Palestine. We hope that a peaceful and durable settlement to the problems elsewhere in the Middle East may soon be reached.

In Haiti, where democracy is beginning to take root, Barbados is proud to have participated in the multilateral initiatives and mission which resulted in the return of Haiti's democratically elected government. The return of President Aristide underscores this continuing success and this continuing process. Haiti is a prime example of a vulnerable small island State receiving, at long last, the support and protection needed from its neighbours and the international community. Much still needs to be done if Haiti's recovery and development, long neglected in the face of political turmoil, are to be assured.

We urge the international community to stay the course with Haiti. We know that progress will be uneven, but we applaud the Government's commitment to the democratic process. Haiti is a Caribbean country with which Barbados shares strong bonds of history and culture. The Haitian people can be assured of our support in their struggle to nurture its fledgling democracy, and improve the economic and social conditions of its people.

Barbados applauded the decision of the United Nations last May when it extended indefinitely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). But now the spirit of this agreement has become a casualty of recent events. Barbados deeply regrets the decision by some States to resume nuclear testing, which

runs counter to the spirit of the NPT and the commitment by nuclear weapons States to exercise the utmost restraint, pending entry into force of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. As a small island developing State and a non-nuclear-weapon State, Barbados has a vested interest in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the disarmament of existing nuclear stockpiles.

Barbados therefore supports the moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons in place, and urges nuclear Powers to heed the call by the international community to refrain from any activity that violates the spirit of the Treaty. As an island State whose people depend on the sea for a large part of their livelihood, Barbados is gravely concerned about the potential danger to its fragile marine ecosystems. We are therefore implacably opposed to the transshipment of nuclear materials and hazardous wastes through the Caribbean basin.

International terrorism, transnational crime, drug trafficking and money-laundering, are matters of grave global concern, particularly to a small country like Barbados. The destabilizing threat of related cartels to the democratic order in small States is particularly serious. While Barbados has been put on full alert, we recognize our limited capacity to effectively police our own borders. We deeply appreciate the bilateral assistance in this area, and will continue to work closely with other regional partners and related international bodies to combat this global cancer.

The year 1995 is a special one for the United Nations. It is a year for solemn reflection on the mission and achievements of the Organization, and for new directions to meet the challenges ahead.

The world we face is characterized by increasing globalization of production, liberalization of trade, and an explosion of information technology. Increasingly, States find themselves restricted in their capacity to control or influence the flow of international capital, other than by providing hospitable conditions to attract it. Moreover, there is an emerging consensus on the reordering of the role of the State in economic development, in the direct creation of wealth and in the complementary nature of the public and private sectors.

A significant feature of this changed world is the emergence of non-governmental organizations as a major influence in domestic and international public policy. Barbados welcomes this participatory power of civil society, which has deepened and enriched the debate on international issues and helped shape the global agenda to better reflect the popular will.

The framers of the Charter demonstrated this foresight in the Preamble, not with the words "We the Governments", but with the words "We the peoples". And as we approach the new millennium, the slow but sure triumph of peoples over institutions is becoming increasingly evident. An appreciation and analysis of these global changes is critical to a reformed United Nations if it is to meet the challenge of the twenty-first century while remaining faithful to the original ideals of the Charter.

But good governance still is, and always will be, the best instrument for the expression of the popular will. Government is, after all, when exercised responsibly and accountably, a profoundly moral vocation. And just as Governments cannot, domestically, retreat from that moral function of fostering peace and upholding justice and liberty, neither can they do so internationally.

Barbados supports the reform process. A reformed United Nations system should be cost-effective and efficient. The process should be orderly and informed by solid analytical work, with decisions based on rigorous evaluation of the mandates and performance of affected institutions and their relevance to the changing demands of developing countries. In this connection, Barbados believes that the abolition of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development would be premature. Restructuring of these institutions may well be warranted, but due process should first be served.

Reform of the United Nations must not mean an abandonment of international cooperation and a retreat into isolationism by the strong and powerful among us. The growing interdependence on which the welfare of all our people depends makes isolationism an irresponsible fantasy. The problems that beset us — the degradation of the environment, the plight of the poor and the dispossessed, narco-trafficking and money-laundering, human rights abuses, and, especially, ensuring the equal rights of women and children — can be solved only through more intense international cooperation.

Let us by all means streamline this Organization and its allied agencies. Let us make them more effective in the delivery of programmes of direct benefit to our peoples. But let not calls for better management and increased efficiency cloud any lack of resolve by the

more fortunate among us to discharge their international responsibilities, or hamper the Organization's capacity to fulfil the mandates entrusted to it by Member States.

The United Nations has before it a daunting task. It must enlarge the Security Council to better reflect the realities of membership since 1965 as well as the geopolitical changes in the global environment. In particular, it must redesign its peace-keeping machinery to cope with the changing nature of conflicts in today's world — namely, conflicts mainly within nations, not between nations. Barbados supports the structure for such reform contained in "An Agenda for Peace", and salutes the Secretary-General for his distinctive leadership on this crucial issue.

In the economic and social fields, the United Nations must intensify its support to the development effort of developing countries. Barbados supports the framework for an "Agenda for Development", prepared by the Secretary-General. The United Nations now has before it a comprehensive development agenda created by the continuum of United Nations Conferences in New York, in Rio, in Vienna, in Barbados, in Cairo, in Copenhagen and in Beijing. Barbados reaffirms the central role of women in development, which is acknowledged in the respective Programmes of Action of all these Conferences. Women bring their unique perspective to the development process — and without it, the whole is impoverished.

Implementation of these expanded programmes is crucial. They must be carried out with commitment and dispatch. But even with expected improvements in efficiency, these critical tasks cannot be accomplished unless the United Nations system is placed on a sound financial footing. This is why we urge early action to solve the acute financial crisis of the Organization.

All States, big and small, powerful and weak, learn that power must be exercised responsibly. The big and strong have a special role to play in a reformed United Nations, particularly in the maintenance of peace. It is unrealistic not to recognize this. But the small and weak also have their own vital contribution to make. Both must act responsibly and within both the letter and the spirit of international law.

Barbados is confident that Member States can rise to this collective challenge. The machinery is already in place — in particular, the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the strengthening of the United Nations system.

Barbados will participate fully in this historic session. It will work to revitalize and strengthen this unique institution, where humanity's greatest hope for peace, security, development and social justice resides. Together, we can forge a renewed United Nations capable of fulfilling the promise enshrined in "We the peoples".

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Culture, Youth and Sport of the Principality of Liechtenstein, Her Excellency Ms. Andrea Willi.

Ms. Willi (Liechtenstein): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. At the same time, I wish to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy.

We are meeting this year at a crucial moment in the history of the United Nations. The fiftieth anniversary of the Organization should be an occasion on which to review the first half-century of the United Nations, but also, first and foremost, to prepare the Organization for its future activities and to address the manifold challenges that are ahead of us.

While we commemorate the United Nations fiftieth anniversary, Liechtenstein is celebrating its fifth year of membership in the Organization. When Liechtenstein was admitted to the United Nations, the global situation was undergoing fundamental changes. People around the world hoped that the Organization would be able to work in a comprehensive and more efficient way towards fulfilling the purposes assigned to it under the Charter. Many of these hopes have remained unfulfilled. The optimism that prevailed at the beginning of the post-cold-war era has turned into sometimes heavy criticism and a decreasing confidence in the work of the United Nations. This criticism is not always justified and is sometimes based on a lack of understanding of the functioning of the United Nations or, more often, on a one-sided approach to its activities.

The achievements of the Organization in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance, the promotion and protection of human rights and the strengthening and further development of international law, to name only a few, are unique and undeniable. However, it remains a fact that events of the recent past have undermined the credibility of the United Nations in the eyes of many people, and we have to make every effort to restore and

enhance the confidence of the peoples that we represent. We must only look back in order to make the best use of the experience we have acquired over the past 50 years and to enable the Organization to respond effectively to the new challenges it faces today.

The financial situation of the Organization is beyond any doubt one of the issues that need to be addressed urgently. After many years of serious financial problems, we have reached a stage where the work of the United Nations itself is in jeopardy. Drastic measures had to be taken recently to guarantee the continuation of its daily work. It is of the utmost importance, however, that no measures be taken which affect the nature and the efficiency of United Nations activities, which are urgently needed. The efforts to improve and to monitor the administrative and management capabilities must be continued and further enhanced. All Member States have to pay their assessed contributions fully and on time if a durable solution to the current crisis is to be found. We are confident that the Working Group that you, Mr. President, will be chairing, will produce fruitful results.

The increasing financial burden that peace-keeping operations impose on national budgets must be alleviated. We are of the opinion that a proliferation of peace-keeping operations has to be avoided, and I wish to emphasize that the concept of preventive diplomacy deserves even more attention than it has received until now.

It is obvious that the world has changed. It is also obvious that the challenges for the United Nations have changed. For these reasons, changes have to be made within the Organization in order to enable it to cope with these challenges. We therefore support the efforts to reform, modernize and restructure the United Nations and welcome the process that has been initiated to that effect.

Many people wrongly identify the United Nations only with the activities of and the decisions taken by the Security Council. While we must work together in order to promote understanding and knowledge of other United Nations activities, which are equally important, we also have to understand that issues of international peace and security directly or emotionally affect people all over the world. We therefore have to make every effort to enhance the effectiveness and the credibility of the work of the Council. A limited expansion of the permanent and non-permanent membership and improved working methods, as well as enhanced transparency, would certainly make an important contribution in this respect. As a small country, we follow the activities of the pertinent Working Group with particular interest. We are of the view that the work done so far has been very substantial. However, many of the sensitive questions require further discussions.

Liechtenstein, like many other countries, has to rely on the universal respect for international law. The United Nations has made remarkable contributions to the further development and strengthening of international law. The adoption of new legal instruments in important areas, however, sharply conflicts with continued and sometimes systematic violations of international law, particularly in the field of human rights, and of international humanitarian law. The establishment of the international ad hoc Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda can prove to be an important element in preventing the recurrence of such violations. It is essential that, for the first time since the Tribunals of Nuremberg and of Tokyo, individuals be held responsible for violations of international humanitarian law. We hope that the work of these Tribunals will be effective and will contribute to the early establishment of a permanent international criminal court.

The Liechtenstein Government welcomes the historic decision to make the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) permanent. We have come one step closer to the overall elimination of nuclear weapons, and we express our most fervent hope that the NPT will very soon become universal. We therefore appeal to those States which have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so urgently. We further express our hope that the next step will be the early conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty. Liechtenstein deplores the fact that nuclear tests are still going on and urges all nuclear-weapon States to refrain from any further testing.

One of the most remarkable and uncontested merits of the United Nations in its first 50 years lies in the field of self-determination. While some people seem to think that these activities of the Organization are a closed chapter that belongs to the past, others, including the Government of Liechtenstein, are of the view that the potential of the right to self-determination has not been exhausted and offers possibilities to cope with many conflict situations all over the world. We are convinced that the right to self-determination deserves further discussion and development within the United Nations. Liechtenstein has therefore, within the framework of its national activities for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary, organized two international conferences this year dedicated to this subject. We hope that we can continue to count on the Organization's interest in this

matter, which is of crucial importance for the fulfilment of its purposes.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, which concluded in Beijing three weeks ago, reaffirmed that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an integral part of universal human rights. The Liechtenstein Government welcomes the fact that the Conference agreed on a wide range of measures to remove the remaining obstacles to women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action contain a comprehensive plan for the international community to promote the status of women, to the ultimate benefit of society as a whole. It gives me pleasure to announce that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has recently been submitted to the Liechtenstein Parliament for approval.

The fiftieth anniversary cannot be an occasion for self-congratulation. However impressive the achievements, however disappointing the failures, one thing is certain: there is no alternative to the United Nations, and all Member States have to work together to make the Organization stronger and more efficient. The Government of Liechtenstein remains committed to this goal.

The President: I now call on the Minister of External Affairs of the Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Baboucarr-Blaise I. Jagne.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. Our confidence in your stewardship is further strengthened by your distinguished career at home and, indeed, your understanding of international affairs. I should therefore like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you carry out your important mandate.

I should also like to pay tribute to your illustrious predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, for a job well done. Indeed, he has honoured his country and, by extension, the entire African continent by succeeding in giving the presidency of the General Assembly a new image.

As for the Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, we can hardly thank him enough for his work, including the excellent arrangements made for this session, which takes on particular importance this year. The Secretary-General deserves commendation for all his commitment to development, social justice and international peace and security — objectives on the basis of which this Organization was founded.

Having said that, I should like to take this opportunity to welcome the one-hundred-eighty-fifth Member of the United Nations. Palau's recent admission is a true reflection of the universality of the Organization.

It is regrettable, though, that it has not been possible to discuss the readmission of the Republic of China on Taiwan on the basis of the same principle. Considering its population of 21 million and the fact that it is one of the world's leading economies, my delegation sincerely believes that the Republic of China on Taiwan, readmitted as a full Member, would make significant contributions to the work of the United Nations. It is hoped that such a move would also facilitate the process of reunification.

About the same time last year we informed this Assembly of the establishment of an Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council and a new Government in the Gambia, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Captain Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, following the military takeover on 22 July 1994. The factors that compelled the Army to take over the reins of power have already been explained in sufficient detail. Prominent among the reasons was rampant corruption.

In this regard, let me inform the Assembly that the various commissions of inquiry established to probe the activities of the former regime have so far made shocking revelations about the degree of corruption and mismanagement that was the order of the day in the Gambia during the last 30 years. The most devastating revelation of all has been made by the Crude Oil Commission, which uncovered the embezzlement of millions of dollars meant to finance development projects in the country.

Equally breathtaking are the findings of the Commission concerning Government Departments and line Ministries. The work of the Public Assets and Properties Recovery Commission, also chaired by a Superior Court Judge, is progressing steadily. Here again what has been unfolding leaves no reasonable doubt that there was widespread abuse of public office under the previous regime.

Meanwhile, the Commission of Inquiry into Land Administration is currently examining the evidence that it has been gathering since its creation, and it will submit

its report soon. By all accounts, the findings so far of the Commission of Inquiry into the Financial Activities of Public Corporations are also earth-moving.

Strenuous efforts are being made to recover everything stolen. But the important thing is the lesson drawn from all these Commissions, which, basically, is that public office is essentially for the service of one's country, and not to be used as a vehicle for self-enrichment. Even members of the general public are now more responsive to their tax obligations, as evidenced by the record tax collections since the setting up of the Commissions to which I have referred. More important, the principles of accountability, transparency and probity in public life are gradually taking root in Gambian society.

All these facts speak for themselves, and we now understand why the Gambia is poorer today than it was at the time of independence. The country's meagre resources, which should have been utilized for development purposes, were grossly mismanaged — to say the least. This is why not a single hospital or high school had been built after 30 years of independence. It was deliberate policy to keep our people ignorant and, therefore, no serious attempt was made to build a television station or, at least, to improve the national radio station so that it could be heard all over the country.

Can this, in all honesty, be called democracy? And, to perpetuate themselves in power, the authorities of the former regime brought in truck-loads of foreigners to vote for them during elections. In the absence of an independent electoral commission it was easy for them to indulge in such malpractice.

The Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council Government has since adopted a Programme of Rectification and Timetable for Transition to Democratic Constitutional Rule by July 1996. Mindful, however, of the fact that democracy and development are inextricably linked, we have also drawn up a development agenda focusing mainly on the social sectors. The two programmes, contained in one document, were formally submitted to our traditional partners-in-development for assistance. To our great surprise, however, and despite all the hullabaloo over the need to speed up the democratization process, very little or no assistance at all was forthcoming to complement our national efforts.

Despite the fact that the Timetable was reduced from four years to two years after nationwide consultation, the European Union and its allies still maintain sanctions against the Government. None of the efforts made to implement the various activities in the transition Programme have been acknowledged by them. I am referring to the Constitutional Review Commission, the Civic Education Programme, and the Electoral Law Review Committee. Our traditional partners in development all reneged on their promises. This unfounded scepticism has not deterred us from forging ahead with our plans to build a new society. That is why we have decided to finance the operations of some of these activities to demonstrate our commitment to the transition Programme.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As a serious-minded Government we cannot abdicate our responsibility, or our duty, towards our people. It is for that reason that two high schools and three junior secondary schools are being built. They should be ready within the next few weeks.

Plans are also well under way to build at least a third referral hospital. In addition to the building of schools our national education policy is currently under review with the aim of making education more accessible to all, notably to girls, and tailored to suit our national development objectives. Recently, too, we have embarked on the building of a university. All these efforts clearly demonstrate once more the importance attached to the development of human resources. This, we are convinced, will rescue our people from the darkness of ignorance, illiteracy and deprivation.

In the area of infrastructural development, not only are roads being built, but His Excellency the Chairman of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council and Head of State recently laid the foundation-stone for the new Banjul International Airport complex. In fact, work has commenced on this project, which is on a turn-key basis.

As agriculture is the backbone of the economy, the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council Government is giving this sector all the attention that it deserves. That is in line with our thinking that a nation that cannot feed itself can hardly be called independent. A hungry nation cannot concentrate on nation-building. Besides, food is used as a weapon.

It is said that the youth of today are the future leaders of tomorrow. Guided by this adage and the

principle of good citizenry, the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council has introduced a National Youth Service Scheme, the basic purpose of which is to inculcate discipline and to reorient the thinking of Gambian youth towards nation-building while harnessing their potential for future adult life. The first group of volunteers will be sworn in in the new year.

It may be said without fear of contradiction that Gambians have now become more aware of their rights and duties and that for the first time in many years they face the future with renewed hope and confidence. On that fateful Friday of 22 July 1994, His Excellency the Chairman of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council, Captain Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, woke a nation that had been slumbering for 30 years with a new vision to transform the Gambia into a highly developed model country. In this way the Government will have bequeathed to the present and future generations a legacy worthy of all the sacrifices that are being made today.

History teaches us that once in a while at some point in a country's history a visionary leader will emerge with a mission to transform that society for the better. We in the Gambia are fortunate that in the hour of need, His Excellency Captain Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, a soldier with a difference, took centre stage, and now provides the quality of leadership commensurate with the challenges of the times. Since the advent of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council to power under Chairman Jammeh's guidance we have learned within a short period of time what effective leadership means, and have come to the conclusion that there is no gainsaying that a leadership with vision always has the nation's interests at heart.

Similarly, at the international level when the world's leadership is characterized by statesmen with a vision, the collective interests of mankind always have primacy over other considerations emanating from narrow-minded nationalism. As great minds think alike, and as a bitter lesson had been learned from two world wars, the need was felt to create the United Nations. It is interesting to note that in the Preamble to the Charter we do not find the usual phrases that appear in other international legal instruments, such as "We the contracting parties" but instead we have the words

"We the peoples of the United Nations".

The concept of international solidarity and the unity of the human race immediately come into play with the expressed determination not only

"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"

but also

"to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples".

It is in this spirit that my delegation views the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen last March as a significant turning-point in the international community's persistent efforts to improve the quality of life of peoples all over the world. The Summit, including the non-governmental organizations forum, facilitated a broader exchange of views by the international community on social development issues, with emphasis on poverty alleviation, the generation of employment, and health care.

The adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action conveys our collective concern over the world's social ills and indeed the commitment to a concerted effort to find viable solutions to these problems.

Of particular relevance to my delegation are the commitments made by the said forum concerning the socio-economic development of Africa, and of the least-developed countries in particular, and the provision of the necessary financial and other resources. These commitments should serve as the basis for Africa's sustained economic and social development.

The political will and resources necessary for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development should be demonstrated not only in the full application of the 20/20 initiative but also the channelling of substantial technological, scientific and other resources aimed at achieving our objectives.

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, which has just ended, highlighted gender equality and gender needs, including the participation of women in the economic and political decision-making process, the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, adequate recognition and support of the contribution of women to the management of natural resources and the safeguarding of the environment. Indeed, as ably stated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

> "The empowerment of women is the empowerment of all humanity!" *(Press Release SG/SM/5732)*

The Platform for Action, which focuses on the role of women in development, should provide important guidelines for realizing the goals that we have set. In the Gambia, women have been playing an indispensable role in national development. Today 4 out of 14 Ministers are women, responsible for important sectors such as health and social welfare, education, youth and sports, and tourism and culture. Our participation in the World Conference with our First Lady as Head of Delegation was inspired by the Government's commitment to women's issues, including gender equality and the encouragement of women to participate in national development.

It goes without saying that women and children constitute the most vulnerable group in society, and we will not be doing justice to our children if we do not renew the commitments made during the World Summit for Children and acknowledge the preponderant role played by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in mapping out strategies for the greater welfare of children all over the world. We in the Gambia have made considerable progress in the implementation of the mid-term decade goals, notably in the area of the Expanded Programme on Immunization.

At this juncture, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the memory of the late James P. Grant, the former Executive Director of UNICEF, for his outstanding performance in increasing international public awareness of the plight of children and his total dedication to the cause of children the world over. It is our fervent hope that the new Executive Director will build on the achievements of her predecessor.

An issue related to the question of women and children is population and development. It will be recalled that at the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in September 1994, far-reaching decisions were taken, as outlined in the Programme of Action that was adopted. What is important here is that what should be done at the national level should be complemented by a concerted international effort, as agreed in Cairo.

The interrelationship between population and the environment cannot be overemphasized. In fact, in the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, it is stated that

> "Pressure on the environment may result from rapid population growth, distribution and migration, especially in ecologically vulnerable ecosystems. Urbanization and policies that do not recognize the need for rural development also create environmental problems." *(A/CONF.171/13/Rev.1, annex, chapter III, section C, para. 3.26)*

In this regard, it is gratifying to note that following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, it has been possible, under Agenda 21, to successfully conclude the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

In the same vein, we are mindful of the needs of our peoples for better living standards and improvement of the rural and urban environment through the provision of adequate shelter and sustainable human settlements. My delegation therefore anxiously looks forward to the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June next year.

All these world conferences on various issues of concern to the international community should be seen as our collective endeavour to give concrete expression to the pledge enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations

> "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

In pursuit of these objectives, we should also be strengthened in our resolve, as also stated in the Charter,

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

This leads me to recall the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna a few years ago. We in the Gambia have always maintained that human rights should not be viewed only from the narrow perspective of civil and political rights, but also from the perspective of the right to development. In the Gambia, over the last 30 years, we have had the experience of elections being held at regular intervals, but we all know that it was only a facade.

There is no point in overemphasizing civil and political rights in a developing country at the expense of more pressing needs in other areas, such as health, education and agriculture. Before people can think of casting a vote they first of all want to make sure that they have enough food to eat, can send their children to school and have access to health care. In any case, let there be no illusion about this, for democracy cannot flourish under conditions of abject poverty.

The greatest threat to international peace and security today is the ever widening gap between rich and poor. And since we live in a world of interdependence, the North-South dialogue that has been dormant for so long needs to be revived urgently to put the emphasis on the economic development of third world countries.

The President returned to the Chair.

It is true that the world economic situation has registered notable improvements in the economies both of industrialized and of some developing countries. It is to be noted, however, that the various growth rates in different developing countries reflect their limitations and lack of adequate incentives and resources.

The conclusion of the Uruguay Round is expected to generate an increase in merchandise trade of 12 per cent by the year 2005. As far as developing countries are concerned, however, any benefits to be derived from this agreement would depend largely on their accessibility to markets through the removal, of course, of tariff as well as non-tariff barriers.

It is feared, though, that in the case of sub-Saharan Africa any gains from the Uruguay Round will be seriously limited by the low proportion of manufactured goods in its exports. The case is even more serious for least developed countries.

The Economic and Social Council's high-level meeting on the development of Africa within the context of the review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, held from 4 to 6 July 1995 in Geneva, was indeed very timely. None the less, the mapping out of all these strategies for development will have little meaning unless they are matched by the necessary resources to achieve the desired results, especially when the resources generated through structural adjustment are paradoxically diverted to service our debts. And we know that it is indeed an excruciating burden.

All these issues have been adequately addressed in the United Nations Agenda for Development. In the Agenda for Peace, however, there is still the need for greater efforts to find solutions to the various protracted conflicts around the world. There have been a lot of criticisms and reservations pertaining to peace-keeping operations — notably with regard to the huge costs involved — but peace is priceless.

What has happened to the peace dividend, anyway, which was talked about so much during previous sessions of the General Assembly? The head of the Australian delegation made some interesting proposals regarding the financing of peace-keeping operations. There is a lot of sense and merit to what he said, and we should be doing justice to ourselves if these proposals were considered seriously. We must never relent in our collective endeavour to find lasting solutions to all the conflicts besetting the international community, whether in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi or Afghanistan, to name a few.

In our subregion, we welcome the signing of the Peace Agreement by all the warring factions in the Liberian civil war and the establishment of Council of State to oversee the transition to a democratic, freely elected civilian Government. It is our fervent hope that the cease-fire will hold so that the people of Liberia will once again live in the environment of peace and stability that has been denied them for so long. Let me take this opportunity to commend the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for its timely initiative and persistent endeavour to finally put together this important peace package. This clearly demonstrates that regional arrangements, as stipulated in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, could play a preponderant role in conflict resolution.

We have been following with great attention the progress made in the Middle East peace process, and my delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate both Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on these achievements and to encourage them to maintain the same commitment in the quest for a just and lasting peace.

With regard to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, my delegation notes with cautious optimism the recent peace deal between the parties concerned. It would not have been possible, however to bring the Serb aggressors to the negotiating table without the limited use of force against them.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir has also been of concern to my delegation. We therefore urge all the parties to the conflict to try to resolve this long-running dispute through dialogue.

We in the Gambia have always maintained that we will never condone the use of force by a bigger Power to impose its will on a smaller country. I am referring to the lingering problems resulting from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, such as the question of prisoners of war, payment of reparations and, indeed, the return to Kuwait of all properties taken away during the invasion. In short, Iraq should comply with all Security Council resolutions. Meanwhile, though, ways and means should be found to ease the suffering of the innocent Iraqi civilian populations.

Fifty years is a relatively short period in the life of an international organization such as the United Nations, but it has been a period full of important and eventful activities, with successes and setbacks.

For 50 years now the United Nations has been working for global development and the maintenance of international peace and security. Its Charter has become the legal and moral foundation of international relations. Through the United Nations we have witnessed the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the enactment of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the holding of global conferences on the environment, development, population, children, women, and soon, on human settlements.

The United Nations should be commended primarily for the broader role it played during the cold-war period and for championing the concerns and interests of developing countries. It has always provided a platform where big and small nations meet and discuss issues of common concern.

At this juncture, when we are celebrating the golden jubilee of the United Nations, my delegation believes that the time could not be more propitious to lift the economic blockade against Cuba. This dynamic island nation has made remarkable progress in the area of medicine and genetic engineering, achievements that Cuba would share with the rest of the international community.

As a small developing country confronted with unique challenges, the Gambia is keen to ensure that the ongoing reforms aimed at restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations remain on course. The strengthening of the role of the General Assembly and the office of its President as well as the improvement in the performance of the Secretariat should be commended. Any reform of the United Nations system should emphasize the need for more coordination between agencies and the development of new procedures for the accelerated implementation of programmes and activities.

The challenges facing the United Nations today will continue well into the twenty-first century. In this connection it is imperative to restructure the composition of the Security Council as soon as possible to reflect the realities of today and in that restructuring Africa's interest must be taken into account. In other words, Africa must be represented permanently on the Security Council.

Let me conclude by renewing the Gambia's commitment to the ideals of the United Nations. The Organization is far from being perfect, but, at the same time, we do recognize that it is indispensable, for it is the repository of the hopes and aspirations of mankind.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Mr. José Manuel Trullols.

Mr. Trullols (Dominican Republic) *(interpretation from Spanish):* May I first of all on behalf of the Dominican Republic and on behalf of its Constitutional President, Mr. Joaquín Balaguer, express our sincerest congratulations to the President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Secondly, I wish to express our profound gratitude to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, who presided over the forty-ninth session and, particularly, to the Secretary-General, who, by his extraordinary efforts and tireless dedication in a world marked by challenges and breaches of the peace, wages a daily combat for the full implementation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Dominican Republic can affirm with pride on this fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations its role as a founding Member of the United Nations, which signed the San Francisco Charter within the international order that rose from the ashes of the Second World War, whose fiftieth anniversary we also commemorate, and as a country that defends the principle of sovereignty as the inalienable right of the people.

Fifty years after the creation of the United Nations in 1945, the world is in a state of transition toward what has been termed a new world order, moving from bipolarity to unipolarity in a multipolar world, following upon the world built in Yalta and in the Bretton Woods agreements.

The 1945 order was based on a balance of power and on the United Nations as a reflection of the real desire to seek security and universal peace — and the Organization has managed, since its creation, to avert another nuclear holocaust.

Small countries such as the Dominican Republic, staunch guardians of their national sovereignty, have witnessed during the five decades since 1945 this order created through the United Nations and its specialized agencies, with Bretton Woods, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Council for Economic Aid (COMECON), the Warsaw Pact, and the European Economic Community — today the European Union; the evolution of countries with market economies and those with centrally planned economies, and the decolonization processes which have resulted in the establishment of many independent States. All this has left an indelible imprint on the annals of contemporary history and has been rich in lessons for all the nations of the world — lessons, in a word, on relations between North and South.

The order which emerged from Bretton Woods was reflected in the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); and the aborted International Trade Organization of 1947, which was replaced by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), from which the agricultural sector, services and intellectual property were excluded. All this explains why 46 years later, with the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and the birth, in 1993, of the World Trade Organization (WTO), we are giving multilateral shape to world trade in order to overcome bilateral barriers and, above all, the protectionism that was practised by the industrial countries.

In these five decades, the small countries had to struggle mightily to uphold the principles of democracy, including respect for human rights, and to defend their right to access to the markets of the industrialized countries against tariff and non-tariff barriers, quotas, and downward spiralling in the prices of their raw materials. We can, however, point with pride to the way we fought for our demands for greater symmetry and fairness in commercial and economic relations. This in the end led to the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The San Francisco Charter illuminated like a powerful beacon the road to the future of the countries that had had to experience the difficult period of the bipolar world. For its part, the Dominican Republic, committed as always to the principles of the Charter, was able to attain the functional democracy we enjoy today. This took place within a world that has some 30 integration processes and has seen the emergence of three strong economic- integration blocs with their spheres of influence — such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) — in addition to the Free Trade Zone of the Americas, which will probably be established in the year 2005; and, for Eastern Asia, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC). There are also the political repercussions these processes have had on a world where the dreams for centrally planned economies have faded. Our country is now a member of the recently established Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

This new world order that has now become the global village foreseen by Marshall McLuhan, within a globalized, international economy, will not be without tensions, for we do not yet fully grasp the cultural plurality of nations and the strong search for identity in regions and within ethnic and religious groups. Contrary to the popular phrase, history has not come to an end. A new process is beginning with the expression by peoples and regions of their national identity.

The globalization of trade would seem to transcend the borders of the nation-State and create a concept of a region-State, given the fragmentation of national aggregate assets.

Within the family of nations we feel proud to have been not only one of the 51 States that participated in the San Francisco Conference, but also one of the first to have ratified, in resolution 962 of our National Congress, the Charter of the United Nations, which was promulgated by our Executive Branch on 11 August 1945.

On the fiftieth anniversary of that memorable date we wish to pay tribute to those members of the Dominican delegation who signed that historic document: Manuel Peña Batlle, Emilio García Godoy, Gilberto Sánchez Lustrino, Tulio Franco y Franco and Minerva Bernardino. We are a nation deeply committed to the

proper functioning of democratic institutions, having attained a commendable political stability in our continent's community of nations.

In this context, the United Nations will be making a praiseworthy contribution to the process of maintaining stability in our country by responding to the request of the Dominican Republic for reimbursement of the funds spent in implementing the economic embargo imposed on our neighbour, Haiti. The Dominican Republic has submitted that request to the Secretariat and our Government is now awaiting a response.

As a developing country the Dominican Republic must face many challenges in the sensitive areas of drug trafficking and drug consumption. This is a problem our country has met with a State policy that provides for severe punishments for offences related to this crime against humanity. At the present time legislation is pending in our National Congress to punish money-laundering, which is an activity related to the criminal drug traffic. We are also coordinating our policies with the international community, since in this field more than any other international cooperation is required.

It is fitting here to congratulate the United Nations Secretariat on the successful holding of the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing. That Conference represents a milestone in the Organization's history because of the recognition it has granted to that noble human being who makes up half of all humanity and is the mother of the other half.

In that connection we would reiterate at this fiftieth session, just as we did at the last session, our concern at the Secretary-General's proposal to merge the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The General Assembly should recall Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/4 of 9 May 1979, which established the permanent headquarters of the Institute in the Dominican Republic.

We wish to reiterate — with the utmost courtesy, but also with the utmost firmness — our request that INSTRAW and UNIFEM not be merged, maintaining the commitments contained in General Assembly resolution 34/157 of 17 December 1979 and the agreement that established INSTRAW in Santo Domingo so that our first city of America may remain the headquarters of that important Institute. This would also be in keeping with the extraordinary importance of the recently concluded Conference on Women.

We are now only six years from the beginning of the twenty-first century, in the year 2001, and our thoughts turn to an assessment of the past 50 years since the founding of the United Nations. We should also be visualizing the foundations and the shape of the new world order for the building of a future based on security and world peace. This will require a qualitative change in the United Nations, removing the sacrosanct aura surrounding the veto power of the great Powers in the Security Council and promoting a democratic system of coexistence among States and peoples.

The United Nations and we, its Member States, will have to meet the challenge of the demographic or so-called population bomb with growth estimated at 84 million persons per year, and related problems, such as the fact that in 1990 only 40 per cent of the world's population lived in rural sectors and over 50 per cent in urban centres of over 100,000 inhabitants. The number of persons suffering malnutrition is estimated to reach 512 million by the end of the century. Children without schooling will number 315 million, and there will be 889 million illiterate persons. Those living without sanitation systems will reach 1,750 million. Dealing with those problems will be a real challenge.

The new context of the world order will require a three-pronged approach involving an ecological response, a political response and an economic response.

Although the United Nations Environment Programme was an important step forward for the protection of the biosphere, consideration should be given the possibility of creating, after proper study, an ecological response embodied in a United Nations environmental security council composed of Member States with a permanent 15-member executive committee and a secretary-general with executive powers.

The political response would come from the reform of the United Nations Charter. In this connection, we should bear in mind that Article 109 of the Charter, which was written in 1945, provides for the convening of a General Conference within a 10-year period for the purpose of reviewing the Charter. In addition, on 22 April 1991 a number of former Heads of State and political leaders appealed for a renewal of the United Nations. Today, it is appropriate to envisage the inclusion of Germany, Japan and India as members of the Security

Council, as well as the inclusion of representatives of third-world countries.

Charter reform would, of course, imply the exercise of the powers of the Secretary-General supported by under-secretaries for environmental, political and economic affairs.

In addition, the economic response should come from a clear and precise definition of the role of the United Nations within the new order. Since, in the economic sphere, the Group of 7 has already been coordinating its policies through a kind of security council, with the recent addition of Russia, we might envisage its incorporation into the United Nations as a sort of Economic Council that might include, in addition, the countries of southern Asia and the Pacific, as well as Latin America and other regions. It could eventually become a Group of 18, linked to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the specialized agencies and the regional commissions.

The Dominican Republic hopes that the ideas and suggestions that have been put forward, many now under study and being proposed in various forums, will be viewed as a good-will contribution by a small nation — a nation that is small but proud of its participation in the international community.

For that reason, we cannot, as a small nation that believes in unity within diversity, fail to mention our support for the agenda item — proposed by Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Dominica, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, the Solomon Islands, Nicaragua, Niger, Panama, the Central American Republic, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland and our country, the Dominican Republic — regarding the special situation of the Republic of China in Taiwan in the international context, based on the principle of universality and in accordance with the established model of parallel representation of divided countries in the United Nations.

The Republic of China on Taiwan, a Founding Member of the United Nations, has a population of 21 million, a high level of economic development and full political democracy. It has been a model to all developing nations. Its aspiration to participate in the United Nations once again is something positive for the international community. The Organization must not ignore its existence. The Dominican Republic supports the establishment of an ad hoc committee to seek a satisfactory resolution of this matter.

At this fiftieth session, the General Assembly should take stock of the achievements of the United Nations in its 50 years of existence as well as of the unfulfilled objectives in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security. But above all it should adopt a vision of the future that will enable us to build a democratic system of coexistence among States and peoples, inspired by the profound human aspiration to lasting peace. May merciful God help us attain these goals.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.